

1. An apparatus for monitoring the operation of a heating device having at least one heating element moving periodically along a predefined path, the apparatus comprising:
- a first sensor configured to sense the presence of the heating
  - 5 element;
  - a second sensor configured to sense a temperature associated with the heating element; and
  - a controller coupled with said first and second sensors and configured to monitor said first and second sensors and to perform a control
  - 10 function in response to the temperature sensed by said second sensor.

2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said controller is configured to indicate when the temperature sensed by said second sensor deviates from a predetermined temperature range.
3. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said controller is configured to monitor the temperature associated with the heating element over time and indicate when a rising or falling temperature is detected.
4. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said controller is configured to monitor the respective temperatures associated with a plurality of said heating elements and compare the respective temperatures to one another.
5. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said first sensor is a proximity sensor.
6. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said first sensor is an eddy current sensor.
7. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein said first sensor is an optical sensor.

8. An apparatus for sealing bags filled with articles, comprising:  
a sealing station including a press plate and at least one heating element proximate said press plate and configured to move in a periodic motion relative to said press plate;        /
- 5 a conveyor adapted to transport a bag from said bag fill machine to said sealing station; and  
a sealing station monitor comprising:  
a first sensor configured to sense the presence of said heating element as said heating element moves past said first sensor,
- 10 a second sensor configured to sense a temperature associated with said heating element, and  
a controller coupled with said first and second sensors and configured to monitor said first and second sensors and to perform a control function in response to the temperature sensed by said second sensor.

9. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein said controller is configured to indicate when the temperature sensed by said second sensor deviates from a predetermined temperature range.
10. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein said controller is configured to monitor the temperature associated with the heating element over time and indicate when a rising or falling temperature is detected.
11. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein said controller is configured to monitor the respective temperatures associated with a plurality of said heating elements and compare the respective temperatures to one another.
12. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein said first sensor is a proximity sensor.
13. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein said first sensor is an eddy current sensor.
14. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein said first sensor is an optical sensor.
15. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein said heating elements comprise heater blocks secured to a rotating belt.

16. The apparatus of claim 15, wherein said heater blocks are configured and arranged on said belt such that said heater blocks cooperate to seal an individual bag during each revolution of said belt.

17. The apparatus of claim 15, wherein said heater blocks are configured and arranged on said belt to seal a bag in the form of a web or tube at desired intervals along said web or tube.

18. A method of monitoring the operation of a heating device having at least one heating element moving periodically along a predefined path, the method comprising:

sensing the presence of the heating element with a first sensor;

5 sensing a temperature associated with the heating element with a second sensor; and

sending a control signal in response to the temperature sensed by the second sensor.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein sending the control signal further comprises:

sending the control signal when the temperature sensed by the second sensor deviates from a predetermined range.

20. The method of claim 18, further comprising:

sensing temperatures associated with a plurality of heating elements;

comparing the sensed temperatures associated with the plurality  
5 of heating elements; and

sending a control signal in response to the comparison made between the sensed temperatures associated with the plurality of heating elements.

21. The method of claim 18, further comprising:

sensing temperatures associated with the heating element over time;

comparing the sensed temperatures associated with the heating  
5 element over time; and

sending a control signal in response to the comparison made between the sensed temperatures associated with the heating element over time.

22. A method of monitoring a bag sealer having one or more heater blocks moving periodically along a predefined path in proximity to a press plate, the method comprising:
- 5 moving the heater block along the path and past the press plate;  
feeding a bag having an open end to the bag sealer;  
sealing the open end of the bag;  
sensing the presence of the heater block with a first sensor;  
sensing a temperature associated with the heater block with a  
second sensor; and  
10 sending a control signal in response to the temperature sensed by the second sensor.
23. The method of claim 22, further comprising stopping the movement of the heater block when the temperature sensed by the second sensor deviates from the predetermined temperature range.